

Exhibition

MOSCOSO COSMOS: THE VISUAL UNIVERSE OF VICTOR MOSCOSO



WHEN From 14 April to 10 October 2021

WHERE Fundación Luis Seoane, A Coruña

ORGANISED BY Fundación Luis Seoane, (A Coruña); MUSAC Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León (León) e Centro Niemeyer (Avilés). With the collaboration of Acción Cultural Española (AC/E)

CURATED BY David Carballal

The Exhibition

Moscoso Cosmos: The Visual Universe of Victor Moscoso brings to our country a large selection of the work of one of the most original and influential graphic designers of the 20th century. This is his biggest retrospective exhibition so far. The show brings together the renowned series of psychedelic rock posters that he created over eight months in 1966 and 1967, and fourteen issues of the underground magazine *Zap Comix*, which was published over forty years and featured artists such as Robert Crumb or Rick Griffin. It also includes an additional selection of posters, album covers, comics, illustrations for books and magazines, animations and biographical photographs which complete a journey marked by iconic pictures of the second half of the 20th century.

Victor Moscoso's original pieces of graphic art will occupy two rooms of the Luis Seoane Foundation—a large part comes from the City of A Coruña's own collection, Europe's biggest public collection of works by the artist—. The exhibition will also showcase his animations and a space will be dedicated to his spectacular kinetic posters, and to other items that help to understand the artist's unique contributions and work methodology.

Moscoso Cosmos: The Visual Universe of Victor Moscoso has been organised by Fundación Luis Seoane (A Coruña) in association with MUSAC (León) and Centro Niemeyer (Avilés), with the collaboration of Acción Cultural Española (AC/E).

Catalogue

A book will be published to go with the exhibition and Victor Moscoso himself serves as its art director. The texts are written in Galician, English and Spanish. It features an introduction by New York critic Steven Heller and a biography essay by David Carballal, who curated the exhibition and wrote the piece after numerous conversations with the artist. This is the most extensive monograph published so far on Victor Moscoso. There are some 200 pictures in the book, including catalogued

pieces, documents and biographical photographs.

Poster

Victor Moscoso has designed a poster especially for his exhibition at the Luis Seoane Foundation in A Coruña. The use of overlapping images—a technique he developed in his psychedelic era— makes the poster react when exposed to flashing red and blue lights.

After Fundación Luis Seoane, *Moscoso Cosmos: The Visual Universe of Victor Moscoso* will travel to MUSAC in León, and Centro Niemeyer in Avilés.

About Victor Moscoso

Victor Moscoso was born in Vilaboa, a small town in A Coruña, in 1936; and he and his parents moved to Brooklyn, New York, in 1940. He trained as a designer and artist at the Industrial Art Institute in Manhattan, Cooper Union and the Yale School of Art. One of his professors at Yale was Bauhaus artist Josef Albers, whose teachings about colour interaction had a key role in his work as a graphic designer. Attracted by the Beat movement, Victor Moscoso headed for the West coast in 1959, where he continued his studies at the San Francisco Art Institute under Richard Diebenkorn and Nathan Oliveira. He graduated two years later and became a lithography instructor. He seemed destined to become one of the painters of the second generation of the Bay Area Figurative School, but his work as a graphic designer made his career take a happy and unexpected turn.

In the late 1965, the psychedelic movement was beginning to stir in San Francisco. Alongside a new music scene—populated by bands like The Charlatans, Jefferson Airplane, Big Brother and the Holding Company or Grateful Dead— there was a new visual scene too: the posters created by young designers like Wes Wilson, Alton Kelley or Stanley Mouse promptly caught the attention of Victor Moscoso, who had an intuitive understanding that something historical was about to happen.

It was nearing the end of 1966 when he decided to stop painting in order to work exclusively on psychedelic rock poster designs. The next eight months—which culminated in the Summer of Love—saw him work at a hectic rhythm; he would create two or three posters each week for venues like the Avalon Ballroom or the Matrix. This series of posters became the image of the most acid version of the countercultural movement that took the late seventies by storm and served to show the world what was happening in San Francisco in real time. With their daring language—based on distorted, unreadable lettering; decontextualised pictures and glaring contrast of colours—they challenged many of the principles of modern graphic design and their influence can still be felt today. A year later, however, just when art and fashion were starting to absorb the powerful discharge, Moscoso left the scene to dedicate his time—almost exclusively and at a slow pace—to underground comix, where he also walked untrodden paths. Together with artists like Robert Crumb, S. Clay Wilson or Rick Griffin they formed the *Zap* comics collective and published issues of their magazine over the next forty years. *Zap Comix* was a bastion of the freedom of the press in the U.S. in the seventies and became the most lasting and successful project out of the many that came out of the West coast's buoyant underground scene.

Victor Moscoso received Cooper Union's Augustus Saint-Gauden award in 2017; and the AIGA medal in 2018, one of the highest honours in the field of graphic design. For master artists like Milton Glaser “no one else worked with more originality or wit within the genre” and his work continues to be the subject of new exhibitions, anthologies or essays. However, he has lived oblivious to art galleries and agencies for the last five decades... He considers himself a “commercial artist”, but it is hard to imagine a creator who acts more freely. Nowadays, inside a small studio in San Geronimo Valley (West Marin, California), 84-year-old Victor Moscoso is still drawing, making collages and painting.

David Carballal

About the curator

David Carballal is a graphic designer who specialises in publication design and corporate communication. He has designed editorial collections, catalogues and monographs for a number of art and cultural institutions, and has given lectures on contemporary graphic design and art. In 2017 he curated, for the Luis Seoane Foundation, the exhibition *Cómo se imprime un libro. Grafistas e impresores en Buenos Aires 1936-1950* [*How Books are Printed. Graphic Designers and Printers in Buenos Aires 1936-1950*], a journey through the history of Argentina's editorial design through the work of artists like Horacio Coppola, Attilio Rossi, Grete Stern, and Luis Seoane, among others. A book was published as a part of this project, and the exhibition later travelled to Museo Patio Herreriano in Valladolid, the Instituto Cervantes head office in Madrid and Museo Emilio Caraffa in Córdoba (Argentina).

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